

Charlie Chaplin's own story of his Trip Abroad



CHARLIE DISCOVERS HIS ANCESTORS.
Cousin Aubrey Introduces Him to the Great Ones in the Family Album.

By Charlie Chaplin.

(This is the thirty-first instalment of Charlie Chaplin's own story of his European tour. The preceding instalment concluded the recital of his experiences in Paris.)

I AM due back in England next day to lunch with Sir Philip Sassoon and to meet Lloyd George, Lord and Lady Rockingham, Lady Diana Manners and many other prominent people.

We are going back by airplane, though Carl Robinson lets me know that he prefers some other mode of travel.

We figure that by leaving at 8 o'clock in the morning we can make London by 1 o'clock, which will give me plenty of time to keep my engagement.

But we have not been up long before we were lost in the fog over the Channel and were forced to make a landing on the French coast, causing a delay of two hours. But we finally made it, though I was two hours late for my engagement, and the thought of keeping Lloyd George and those other people waiting was ghastly.

On landing in England I was hustled into a car and driven off.

But it was not my car, and I found that I was not being driven to the Ritz, but to the Majestic Theatre in Clapham.

The chauffeur wore a mustache, and though he looked familiar I did not recognize him. But very dramatically he removed the mustache. "I am Castleton Knight. A long time ago you promised me to visit my theatre. I have concluded that the only way to get you there is to kidnap you. So kindly consider yourself kidnapped."

I couldn't help but laugh, even as I thought of Lloyd George. So we went to the theatre and I stayed an hour and surprised both myself and the audience by making a speech.

FAILS TO MEET LLOYD GEORGE.

Back at my hotel Sir Philip met me and tells me that Lloyd George couldn't wait, that he had a most important engagement at 4 o'clock. I explained the airplane situation to Sir Philip and he was very kind.

This is to be my last night in England, and I have promised to dine and spend the evening with my Cousin Aubrey. One feels dutiful to one's cousin.

I also discover that this is the day I am to meet Chloé and H. G. Wells. I phone H. G. and explain that this is my last day, and of my promise to my cousin. H. G. is very nice. He understands. You can only do these things with such people.

My cousin calls for me at dusk in a taxi and we ride to his home in Bayswater.

Reaching Aubrey's home, I notice a number of people on the other side of the street, standing in the shadows. My cousin explains hesitantly that they are just friends of his waiting for a look at me. I feel mean and naughty about this, as I recall that I had requested him not to make a party of my visit.

I just wanted a family affair, with no visitors, and these simple souls on the other side of the street were respecting my wishes. I relent and tell Aubrey to ask them over, anyway. They are all quite nice, simple tradesmen, clerks, &c.

TREATING THE BOYS.

Aubrey has a saloon, or at least a hotel, as she calls it, in the vicinity of Bayswater, and later in the evening I suggest that we go there and take his friends with us. Aubrey is shocked.

"No, not around to my place." Then they all demur. They don't wish to intrude. I like this. Then I insist. They weaken. I weaken. We go to a pub in a very respectable part of Bayswater and enter the bar. The place is doing a flourishing business. There are a number of pictures of my brother Syd and myself all over the walls, in character and straight. The place is packed to-night. It must be a very popular resort.

"What will you have?" I feel breezy. "Give the whole saloon a drink." Aubrey whispers: "Don't let them know you are here." He says this in a very low voice.

But I insist: "Introduce me to all of them." I must get him more custom. He starts quietly whispering to some of his very personal friends: "This is my cousin. Don't say a word."

I speak up rather loudly. "Give them all a drink!" I feel a bit vulgar to-night. I want to spend money like a drunken sailor. Even the customers are shocked.

I am sure that some of them don't believe, despite many assurances. A stunt of my cousin's. But they drink reverently and with reserve and then they bid me "Good-night." And I depart quietly, leaving Bayswater as respectable as ever.

THE FAMILY ALBUM BROUGHT FORTH.

To the house for dinner, after which some one brings forth an old family album. It is just like all other family albums.

"This is your great-grandmother and that is your great-grandmother. This is Aunt Lucy. This one was a French General."

Aubrey says: "You know we have quite a good family on your father's side." There are pictures of uncles who are very prosperous cattle ranchers in South Africa. Wonder why I don't hear from my prosperous relations.

This is the first time that I am aware of my family, and I am now convinced that we are true aristocrats, blue blood of the first water.

When I came I told Aubrey that I could stay only two hours, but it is 4 A. M. and we are still talking. As we leave, Aubrey walks with me toward the Ritz.

GETTING A "LIFT."

We hail a Ford truck on the way and a rather dandified young Johnny, a former officer, gives us a lift.

"Right you are. Jump on." A new element, these dandies driving trucks. Some of them graduates of Cambridge and Oxford, of good families, most of them—impecunious aristocrats. Perhaps it is the best thing that could happen to such families.

This chap is providing groceries for all his friends in Bayswater, and every morning at 4 o'clock he is on his way to the market. He loves the truck. It is so simple to drive.

The lad finally recognizes me and greets me frankly, though formally. It seems so strange to me to hear this truck driver so along conversing in the easiest possible manner.

A truck driver who enjoyed truck driving! He spoke of films for just a bit and then discreetly stopped, thinking perhaps that I might not like to talk about them. And, besides, he liked to talk about his truck.

He was smoking a pipe and wore a Tribby hat, with a sort of frock coat, and his neck was wrapped in a scarf. I figured him to be about thirty years of age.

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